

Recipe

“Green” Maghrebi Lentil & Bread Stew

Here are 5 different ways to view the execution of this recipe. Choose the one that fits your cooking style best.

Format 1: The “Mise-en-place” & Execution Flow

Best for: Ensuring you have everything ready before you start the heat.

Mise-en-place:

- **The Bread:** 1/2 Sourdough Loaf (cubed into 1-inch pieces).
- **Aromatics:** 1 large Onion (diced), 3 cloves Garlic (minced).
- **Flavor Base:** 2 tbsp Tomato Paste, 2 tbsp Fig Spread.
- **Spices:** 1 tsp Cumin, 1 tsp Coriander, 1/2 tsp Cinnamon.
- **Liquids:** 1 can (28oz) Crushed Tomatoes, 4 cups Water (or Broth).
- **The Bulk:** 1 cup Brown/Green Lentils (rinsed).
- **The Finish:** 1 large bag Spinach or Chard, 1 Lemon (juiced), Sour Cream, Fresh Dill.

Execution:

1. **Toast:** Bake bread cubes at 400° F until bone dry and golden (15-20m).
2. **Sweat:** Sauté onion in olive oil until soft (5-8m). Add garlic for 1m.
3. **Deepen:** Add tomato paste & spices. Fry until paste darkens (2-3m).
4. **Simmer:** Add lentils, water/broth, crushed tomatoes, and fig spread. **NO SALT YET.** Simmer covered until lentils are tender (25-30m).
5. **Finish:** Stir in salt, lemon juice, and greens until wilted.
6. **Stew:** Turn off heat. Fold in toasted bread. Let sit 10m.
7. **Serve:** Top with sour cream and fresh dill.

Format 2: The “Flavor Layers” (Step-by-Step Build)

Best for: Understanding the sequential build-up of flavors.

1. **TEXTURE Layer:** Roast the sourdough cubes in the oven first. We want them super dry so they soak up the stew without disintegrating into mush.
2. **AROMATIC Layer:** Sauté onions and garlic. This provides the sweet, savory backbone.
3. **SPICE Layer:** Fry the tomato paste with cumin, coriander, and cinnamon. This “blooms” the spices and caramelizes the sugars in the paste for depth.
4. **EARTH Layer:** Simmer the lentils with the crushed tomatoes and fig spread. The fig adds a hidden sweetness that mimics North African tagines.
Crucial: No salt or acid yet, or the lentils won’t soften properly.
5. **FRESH Layer:** Once lentils are soft, hit it with salt, lemon juice (acid), and the fresh greens.
6. **UNION Layer:** Fold the dry bread into the wet stew off the heat. The bread drinks up the liquid, thickening the stew and becoming dumpling-like.

Format 3: The “Chef’s Shorthand” (Tactical)

Best for: Quick glances while cooking.

- **Roast** bread cubes @ 400F till dry.
- **Sweat** onion in oil.
- **Pincé** (fry) tomato paste w/ garlic & spices.
- **Deglaze** w/ crushed tomatoes, water, fig spread.
- **Simmer** lentils in liquid (covered) till tender (25m).
- **Season** w/ S&P, Lemon Juice.
- **Wilt** greens into pot.
- **Fold** in bread. OFF HEAT. Rest 10m.
- **Garnish** w/ Sour Cream & Dill.

Format 4: The “Timeline” (Parallel Processor)

Best for: Optimization and multi-tasking.

Time	Action	Notes
T-45	Oven 400F	Cube bread. Put in oven.
T-40	Prep Veggies	Dice onion, mince garlic. Rinse lentils.
T-30	Stove ON	Sauté onions.
T-25	Check Bread	Remove if golden/dry. Set aside.
T-22	Fry Paste	Add garlic, paste, spices to pot. Fry 2m.
T-20	Simmer	Add liquids, lentils, fig spread. Cover.
T-05	Prep Garnish	Chop dill. Mix w/ sour cream if desired.
T-00	Finish	Lentils tender? Add salt, lemon, greens.
+2m	The Fold	Stir in bread. Heat OFF.
Serve	Eat	Serve after 10m rest.

Format 5: The “Sensory Script” (Audio-Visual)

Best for: Cooking by feel and intuition.

- **TOUCH:** Bread should feel rock hard and dry coming out of the oven.
- **SMELL:** When frying the paste/spices, wait for the “toasted spice” smell to fill the kitchen (approx 2 mins).
- **LOOK:** The tomato paste should turn from bright red to a rusty brick color.
- **TASTE:** Taste the lentils before adding salt. They should be creamy inside, not chalky.
- **TASTE:** After adding lemon and fig spread, the broth should be a balance of savory, deep sweet, and bright acid.
- **LOOK:** When you fold in the bread, it will look like too much bread. Wait 10 mins, and it will look like a thick, cohesive stew.